



The President's Daily Brief

December 20, 1975

2

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Table of Contents

Angola:

25X1

25X1

Lebanon: Lebanese leaders traded accusations yesterday over the causes of the recent fighting, while Syria continued its efforts to mediate the dispute. (Page 3)

Notes: Cambodia; Kuwait-USSR; Argentina; Mozambique
(Pages 4 and 5)

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

ANGOLA

25X1

Our embassy in Libreville, Gabon, has received second-hand information--originating with a source described to it as reliable--that a fresh contingent of some 3,000 Cuban troops arrived in Pointe Noire, Congo, during the past week. The contingent, supported by "55 tanks" and "additional light armored and support vehicles" reportedly moved into the Angolan exclave of Cabinda.

Three Cuban ships were due to arrive in that area last week. Given the capabilities of the ships involved, however, half the reported number of troops would be a more realistic figure. Whatever the size of the force, its presence in Cabinda, where no fighting is taking place, is unnecessary and its actual destination was probably Angola proper.

25X1

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The Organization of African Unity announced yesterday that a majority of its 46 member states have agreed to hold an emergency summit meeting on Angola from January 10 to 12 in Addis Ababa.

OAU members are deeply divided over Angola, and the summit--which could turn out to be acrimonious--may contribute little toward an African solution to the Angola conflict.

LEBANON

Lebanese leaders traded accusations yesterday over the causes of the recent fighting, while Syria continued its efforts to mediate the dispute.

Christian Interior Minister Shamun and Phalanges Party leader Jumayyil charged yesterday that the "communists" were behind the recent trouble at a small village southeast of Beirut where Shamun's forces clashed with Muslims allied with Socialist leader Kamal Jumblatt.

Jumblatt again has called for Shamun's resignation--along with that of President Franjiyah--and yesterday issued his standard demand for political and economic concessions from the Christians.

The bickering reportedly has prompted the Syrians to summon Jumblatt for another round of talks. The Syrians apparently warned Jumblatt during his visit to Damascus last week that he would lose the backing of Syrian-supported groups in Lebanon if he did not help to end the fighting. Jumblatt is expected to return to the Syrian capital within the next few days.

General Shihabi, Syrian army chief of staff, arrived in the Lebanese capital yesterday, presumably to inform Prime Minister Karami of Syria's mediation plans. President Asad apparently intends to delay sending Foreign Minister Khaddam to Beirut until the cease-fire becomes more stable.

Fighting diminished yesterday in most of Beirut's suburbs, but armed clashes continued in the Tripoli-Zagharta area. Lebanese security forces aided by Palestinian patrols are moving into the disputed areas in the north, and members of the Syrian-controlled Saiqa fedayeen group apparently are trying to arrange a truce between Christian and Muslim militiamen.

NOTES

Cambodia has for the first time supported Laos and Vietnam in their demand that the Thai expel the remaining US military forces from Thailand.

Phnom Penh expressed its support in a joint communiqué issued yesterday following a visit to Cambodia by Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Phoun Sipaseut. The Cambodians, however, have not joined Hanoi and Vientiane in insisting that as a precondition for the normalization of relations Bangkok return all the US-origin aircraft and military equipment taken into Thailand during the last stages of the Vietnam war.

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Kuwait's negotiations with the USSR for the purchase of arms appear to have made progress.

If an agreement is reached, it would mark the first sale of Soviet weapons to any of the Arab sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf. The Kuwaitis can be expected to haggle about types and quantities of weapons and the conditions Moscow wants to attach to any agreement. Negotiations have been stalled over Kuwait's refusal to guarantee that Soviet-supplied weapons would not be used against Iraq, one of Moscow's most important Arab clients. Kuwait and Iraq have long been engaged in a bitter border dispute.

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The continuing rebellion by dissident Argentine air force officers is aggravating serious strains between the military and the administration.

While the move began Thursday apparently as an internal air force insurrection aimed at their commander in chief, who has since been replaced, the dissidents are now calling on the armed forces to overthrow the government because the "political process is exhausted." Given the considerable military opposition to President Peron, the rebels' call could yet evoke a sympathetic response from the other services. Several army officers have told our embassy in Buenos Aires that "the next moves are up to the President."

In statements yesterday, Peron refused to resign, and opposition political leaders later called on her to request a leave of absence. The army might well refuse to obey a presidential order to suppress the air force rebellion, if Peron moves in this direction.

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Forces loyal to the government appear firmly in control of Mozambique.

The authorities are rounding up stragglers from the dissident members of the army and police who clashed with loyal troops beginning on Wednesday night. Our embassy in Lourenco Marques reports that press accounts of widespread disorders have been highly exaggerated.

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